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# Parsis of Iran, *Their Past and Present*

By—His Excellency Dr. Ali Asghar Hekmat,  
*Iranian Ambassador & Plenipotentiary in India*

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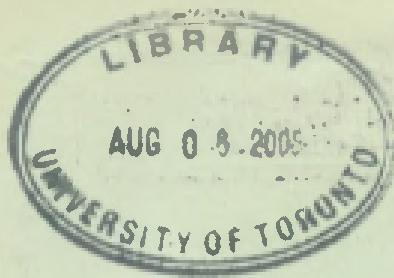
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## His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah,

*Replying to the Parsi Deputation, headed*

*By Late Mr. Dinshah J. Irani, Solicitor, Said:—*

—◆◆—

"You Parsis are as much the children of this soil as any other Iranis, and so you are as much entitled to have your proper share in its development as any other nationals. We estimate our Empire's resources to be even greater than those of America, and in tapping them you can take your proper part. We do not want you to come all bag and baggage; just wait a little and watch. If you find the proposition beneficial both to yourselves and to this land, then do come and We shall greet you with open arms, as We might our dear brothers and sisters."

"Iran is still a virgin country, having all the resources of her development intact within her.....The Parsis, who are the sons of this holy soil, and who possess means and power to work these schemes, should see their way to return to this land and be engaged in the service of their ancient Motherland, and thereby benefit themselves....."—

"Iran is a vast country pregnant with many advantages and fresh fields waiting for development. We suggest that the Parsis who are still the sons of Iran though separated from her, should look upon this country of to-day as their own, and differentiate it from its immediate past, and strive to derive benefit from her developments, especially when they are sure to work their way through ...."

[ H. I. M. REZA SHAH, Teheran, 2-5-1932.

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BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JAMES H. HARRIS  
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HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ALI ASGHAR HEKMAT  
IRANIAN AMBASSADOR AND PLENIPOTENTIARY  
IN INDIA

*Ex Minister of National Education and of Foreign Affairs of  
Iran; Vice-President of the Society of Lion & Sun of Iran;  
and the President of the National Iranian Commission  
of the UNESCO.*

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# **HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ALI ASGHAR HEKMAT,**

Iranian Ambassador and Plenipotentiary in India

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## **A BRILLIANT CAREER**

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By

Kaikhosrow A. Fitter, Neshan-e Elmi, Secretary  
of the Iran League—Bombay.

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I consider it my proud privilege to write here a short sketch of the brilliant career of Iran's eminent politician and scholar, H. E. Dr. Ali Asghar Hekmat, on the occasion of publishing his very interesting lecture on "Parsis of Iran, Their Past and Present", in the Iran League Quarterly.

### **His Education**

H. E. Dr. Hekmat, is the son of Mirza Ahmed Ali Khan Hashmatn'l-Mamalik. He was born in Shiraz on 2nd April, 1893 A. C. He is now 63 years of age. In Teheran he studied philosophy, theology and other allied subjects. At the American College in Teheran he studied French and English.

### **His Political Career**

His services to the Iranian Government began in 1918 when he joined the Ministry of Education, and as a reward of his intelligence and learning, was made head of several departments in the Ministry. For the re-organization of the Judicial Department, he was transferred to it in 1927. From 1930 he sojourned in Europe for about 5 years, where he made considerable progress in acquiring a thorough knowledge in French and English languages and philosophies and literature, and obtained the Licentiate in Literature from the University of Paris (Sorbonne) in 1932. Owing to high qualifications in literature and philosophy, the Iranian Government appointed him the Minister of Education in

1934, which position enabled him to bring about an allround improvement in the educational system of Iran. Two important events go to his credit during his tenure of office, viz. (1) The Millenary Celebrations of the great Poet-Patriot Ferdousi in Teheran and Meshed in 1934; and (2) the establishment of the Farhangistan (Iranian Academy) in Teheran. He was the leader of the Iranian Cultural Mission to the Congress and Exhibition of the Iranian Arts, held in Leningrad in 1935. He successively held the portfolios of the Ministries of Interior, Justice and Public Health in the Iranian Cabinet between 1938 and 1944.

#### Leader of the Cultural Mission in India

He visited India in 1944 as the leader of the Iranian Cultural Mission with two scholars Prof. Pouré Davoud and Prof. Rashide Yassemi, when the Iran League of the Parsis in India had the good fortune to come into closer contact with this eminent personality of Iran. He was elected as the Honorary Patron of the Iran League. The Iran League is very grateful to His Excellency for successfully arranging through his Anjuman-e Assar-e Melli, the installation of the grand bronze Statue of the great Poet Ferdousi in a prominent Khiaban of Teheran, which was presented to the Iranian Nation by the Parsis in India. It was the Parsi community alone, which contributed Rs. 60,000/- towards the cost of the statue.

He was attached to the University of Teheran since 1939 as Professor of History of Persian Literature and History of Religions and Faiths. In November 1945, he participated in the London Unesco Conference as the leader of the Iranian Delegation. From 1948 to 1950, he served his country as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1950, he had the good fortune to be the leader of the Iranian Delegation to the 5th Session of the Unesco General Conference held at Florence (Italy).

#### As Iranian Ambassador & Plenipotentiary in India

In 1953, he was appointed Iranian Ambassador and Plenipotentiary in India. His vast learning was appreciated by the

University of Punjab in 1953, by conferring on him the Degree of D. Litt. (honoris causa). When His Excellency paid his first visit to Bombay as the Iranian Ambassador, the Iran League had given befitting honour to this Scholar-Ambassador, at a grand reception held on 4th March 1954. To the entire credit of His Excellency goes the wonderful successful organization of the 8 days' Millenary Celebrations of Avicenna in Teheran and Hamadan in May, 1954, when scholars from 26 countries participated in the celebrations, including 4 Parsi scholars from Bombay.

#### **His contact with Literary & Cultural Societies**

Besides his diplomatic and political activities, His Excellency shines out brilliantly in the grand arena of Literature and Learning. He holds loving contact with the following Literary and Cultural societies :—

He is

- (1) The Honorary Patron of the "Iran League"
- (2) The President of the Unesco National Commission in Iran;
- (3) The President of the Irano-American Benevolent Society;
- (4) The Vice-President of the Red Lion & Sun Society of Iran;
- (5) The Life Member of the Iran Society of Calcutta;
- (6) The Member of the French Poets Society of Paris;
- (7) The Member of the Farhangistan (Iranian Academy), Teheran;
- (8) A Member of the Society of Russo-Iranian Cultural Relations;
- (9) A Member of the Fuad I Academy of Egypt; and
- (10) A Member of the Iraq Academy.

#### **As Author and Poet**

His Excellency Dr. Hekmat pours his vast learning in his works and poems. Some of his important publications are :—



1. Parsiy-i-Naghz (1951)
2. Saadi and Jami (1942)
3. Five Tales (translation of 5 dramas of Shakespeare)
4. Jami (1942)
5. Niva'i - A treatise on "Amir Ali-Shir Niva'i"
6. An Annotated critical edition of the "Kashf-ul-Asrar."
7. A Paper on Fitzgerald and Jami's Salaman and Absal (in English)
8. A critical edition of the "Majalisu'n-Nafa'is" with Introduction and notes.
9. A Study on Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani of Kashmir (in French)
10. "Romeo and Juliet" and "Layla and Majnu" - A comparative study of Shakespeare and Nizami (1940).

#### Distinctions in Learning

H. E. Dr. Hekmat's valuable contributions for the advancement of culture and learning were appreciated by various Governments, by conferring on him the following Orders and Medals :—

1. The 1st Grade Scientific Medal from the Ministry of Education of the Government of Iran.
2. The 1st Grade "Homayoun" Order from the Govt. of Iran.
3. Order of the "Legion d'Honneur", Commandeur Grade from the French Government.
4. The 1st Grade "Nile" Order from the Egyptian Government.
5. The 1st Grade "Al-Kowkab-ul-Ordoni" from the Trans-jordan Government.
6. The 1st Grade "Vessam Rafedin" Order from the Iraq Government.
7. The 1st Grade "Sardar Ala" Order from the Afghanistan Government.



# THE PARSIS OF IRAN\*

## THEIR PAST AND PRESENT

By

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. A. A. HEKMAT

Iranian Ambassador in India

It is a matter of great joy and pleasure for me that I have been offered this opportunity to say a few words to my Parsi brethren. Your love and affection for your ancestral homeland justifies my addressing you as the representative of that ancient country.

This attachment emanates from a natural instinct of love and affection which is present in every particle of the Universe. It is described either as the force of Gravity or attraction towards the centre, or in other words, as the filial love.

Mowlewi, the great mystic-poet of Iran, explains this universal force in the language of "Nāy" or Flute, which says that all the pathos and emotion hidden in its melody is due to its having been separated from the reed-bed, its birth-place. The couplets are:—

کز نیستان تا مرا بیریده اند	از غیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند
هر کس کو دور ماند از اصل خویش	باز جوید روزگار وصل خویش
هر که او از هم زبانی شد جدا	بی نوا شد کریم دارد صد نوا

(Since they have cut me from the reed-bed  
Men and women have wept at my lamentation;  
Whoever is separated from his origin  
Is always looking forward to re-union;  
Whoever be bereft from his companion  
Is helpless, though numerous be his resources).

\* A lecture delivered under the auspices of the Parsi Anjuman, Delhi, on 2-4-1955.

In the Latin languages, the love for one's country is termed as "Patriotism". This word is derived from the Greek stem "Pater" or Father which shows that the ties of Patriotism are the same as the filial love. Even now in French, the homeland is called "la patrie" which is the very word for "Father." It is, therefore, not surprising that a group of the patriotic Parsis should assemble together here to revive the memory of their forefathers, and should have the representative of their "Fatherland" in their midst to receive a message from their co-religionists and fellow-countrymen in Iran.

When the Delhi Parsee Anjuman invited me to address this gathering, I at once accepted their kind invitation with utmost pleasure and honour. What event can give me a greater joy than the honour of playing the role of the link between a group of the lovers of Iran and the Iranians themselves, as both of them have a common pride of having the Iranian blood in their veins?

### Zoroastrians in Iran.

I now take this opportunity to say a few words about the Zoroastrians of Iran :

Many people believe that the Zoroastrians of Iran do not enjoy a very agreeable social status in Iran at present and that they are maltreated or denied a just and equitable treatment. Such people are mostly influenced by accounts which are either baseless or exaggerated and distorted. They must be told, once for all, and in very clear terms, that they are mistaken in their opinion.

In Iran, like India, the Zoroastrians are now called "Parsis". This name signifies their original abode in "Pars or Fars" which, as we know, is the name of the Southern Province of Iran, where the Achaemenian and the Sassanian monarchs had founded their respective kingdoms in the past. Later, this name came to be applied to the whole of Iran.

The Parsis have not only lived in perfect peace and prosperity and have enjoyed freedom and justice during the last hundred years or so, but as a matter of fact, they have always held satis-

factory position and status in the Iranian society. However, it cannot be denied that in later centuries fanaticism and intolerance had more or less existed in Iran. The then despotic regimes, based as they were on ignorance and bigotry, were averse to the establishment of the rule of Justice and Social equality among the religious minorities. As a result, these minorities had to face some degree of hardship and undue pressure.

The late Professor E. G. Browne who visited Iran during the year 1887-88 has left a detailed account of the unfortunate conditions under which the Zoroastrians had to live in Yazd.<sup>1</sup> Those conditions were deplorable indeed. But while the Speaker was the Education Minister some years ago, he had the opportunity of maintaining direct contact with the Zoroastrian community in Teheran, Yazd and Kerman. He co-operated with them and minutely inspected their educational institutions and, as such, he can claim to be a living witness to the fact that the conditions described by Professor Browne are no more prevalent. It is indeed heartening to note that the dark and shameful pictures painted by some of the travellers are now a matter of the past.

#### Islam treats Zoroastrians favourably.

I may also add that the Iranian Zoroastrians have not only enjoyed the blessings of Justice, Equity, Freedom and other advantages of a democratic government in the present century, but that from the very beginning of the Islamic era in the 7th century A. D. that religion has always ensured them a treatment at the same level as meted out to other peoples who hold a Scripture «*أهل كتاب*» (the Christians and the Jews).

In the Quran reference has been made to the word "Madjus" ("Moghush" in Ancient Persian), which refers to the Zoroastrians (Magians). They are put on the same level as the People of the Book, excluding them from the idolaters who did not believe, in God. The verse XXII, 17 says: "As to the true believers,

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1. Refer "A Year Amongst the Persians"—London. P. 405.

and those who Judaize, and the Sabians; and the Christians, and the Magians, and the idolaters; verily God shall judge between them on the day of resurrection: for God is witness of all things."

ان الذين آمنوا والذين هادوا الصبين والنصرى والمجوس والذين لشركوا لن الله يفصل بينهم يوم القيمة ان الله على كل شىء شهيد .

In the year 8 A. H. the Prophet deputed Al-Ala b. Abdullah to Bahrein to persuade the people to accept Islam or pay Jizya (Tax) جزية. The Zoroastrians and the Jews did not accept Islam but they entered into an agreement with Al-Ala to pay the tax on certain terms. Some of the Arab hypocrites objected to the Prophet's accepting the tax from the Zoroastrians as they were not holders of Scripture. Consequently, the following verse was revealed: "O true believers, take care of your souls. He who erreth shall not hurt you, while ye are rightly directed : unto God shall ye all return, and he will tell you that which ye have done"

يا ايها الذين آمنوا عليكم انفسكم لا يضركم من ضل اذا اهديتكم الى الله مرجعكم جميعا فينبئكم بما كنتم تعملون . (V : 105)

The above account is given by the historian, Al-Baladhuri and it has also been confirmed by the 'Tradition'.

The same historian also gives the following account:—

"There was a Council of the Emigrants in the (Prophet's) Mosque who used to advise Caliph Omar on the affairs of the world, and the Caliph also discussed with them before deciding the cases brought to him by the petitioners. One day he said, "I do not know what treatment should be extended to the Zoroastrians." Abdur-Rahman b. 'Awf, one of the old companions of the Prophet, at once got up and replied, "I bear witness that the Prophet (Peace be on his Soul) had commanded me to apply the same law to them as proscribed for the other People of the Book (-نوا بهم ست اهل الكتاب)."2

The following account has been given by the Shiah traditionists: Onco a Zoroastrian petitioner complained to Hazrat Ali

1. Refer Sahih-o-Abu Dawood, Bab-ul-Kheradj and Al-Baladhuri - vol. 1.
2. Refer Al-Bukari, Bab-ul-Jizyah. Also Al-Baladhuri, vol. 1.

against the harsh treatment meted out to him by one of the governors. On hearing this, he ordered the governor to treat the Zoroastrians and the other Zimmis (protected peoples) with kindness and threatened him with punishment if this order was violated by any of the soldiers.

We have a good deal of documentary evidence to prove that till the 3rd century A. H. the Zoroastrians were held under the trust or Zimmah of the Islamic government and they could lead a peaceful life. Massoudi, the great historian, says that in the centuries following the Arab conquest of Iran, the Zoroastrians remained numerous and were left in the free exercise of their religion.<sup>1</sup> Even the late Professor Browne who, in his account of travels in Iran, had so much to deplore about the tyranny and humiliation which the Zoroastrians of Yezd had to undergo, has in the *Literary History of Persia* (vol. i) described the conditions under which Zoroastrianism existed in Muslim Iran, and has referred to the survival of the Zoroastrian religion, culture and literature during the early Islamic era. He says: "Zoroastrianism.... by no means disappeared from Persia, and the bands of exiles who fled before the Arab invasion first to the islands of the Persian Gulf and then to India, where they founded the Parsi colonies which still flourish in and about Bombay and Surat, were but a minority of those who still preferred Zoroaster to Muhammad and the Avesta to the Quran. Pahlavi literature... continued side by side with the new Arabic literature..... the high priests of the Magian faith were still persons of importance, in pretty constant communication with the Government officials, and still enjoying a large amount of influence amongst their co-religionists, to whom was granted a considerable measure of self-government; and the fire-temples.....were in practice seldom molested, while severe punishment was sometimes inflicted by the Muhammadan authorities on persons whom an indiscreet zeal led to injure or destroy them."<sup>2</sup>

Ferdowsi, who lived in the 4-5th century A. H., when the might of Islam and the influence of the religious classes happened

1. Massoudi's *Meroudjuz Zehab* iv. p. 86.

2. *A Literary History of Persia*, E. G. Browne, vol. I, p. 266.

to be supreme, and an orthodox king like Mahmud of Ghazna ruled over Iran, has throughout the *Shahnameh* mentioned the name of Zoroaster with profound respect and esteem. This throws some light over the attitude of the people of that age towards Zoroaster and his followers. It is also an indication of the strength of the popular opinion in favour of Zoroaster's prophethood, which enabled the poet to glorify his name with perfect peace of mind. Ferdowsi says<sup>1</sup>:

یکی پاک پیدا شد اندر زمان بدست اندرش مجر عود یات  
خجسته بی و نام او زر دهشت که اهریمن بد کنش را بکشت

(In that Ago, a pious man appeared  
with a censor of incense in his hand.  
His name was Zoroaster, the Blessed,  
Who turned out the wicked devil (Ahriman)

Also referring to Zoroaster he said.

دید آمد آن نره ابردی برفت از دل بد سگالان بدی  
ره بت پرستی براگنده شد به بزدان پرستی براگنده شد  
بر از نور ابرد بید دخیل و ز آلودگی پاک شد نخیل

(There appeared that Divine Light  
Which expelled evil from the minds of the vicious;  
The ways of idolatry were given up;  
Whorship of God became Common;  
The crypts became ever-flooded with the Divine Light;  
The woods were purged of all impurity.)

In the 8th century A. H./14th century A. D. while Iran was yet passing through the medieval ages and fanatical ideas were supreme in everybody's mind, the greatest ode-writer of Iran, Hafiz of Shiraz, used Zoroastrian terminology in his sweet verses which are popularly called "the Interpreter of the Secret and the Tongue of the Unknown". In the language of similes, metaphors and metonymy Hafiz calls the Divine Love as "the Eternal Fire", his divine leader as the "Pir-e-Moghan" and the Retiring Abode (Khaneghab) of the saints as the "Dar-e-Moghan" etc. In one of his verses he says:

از آن بدیر مقام عزیز میدارند که آتشی که نبرد همیشه در دل ماست

(I am respected in the temple of the Magians,  
For, the Eternal Fire is always burning in my heart.)



It is with this precedent that at present the Parsis are settled all over Iran. They are found not only in big cities but also in small towns and villages. They are respected elements of the modern society and enjoy a peaceful and contented life.

### The Census of the Iranian Zoroastrians.

Here I should like to give you some figures about the Parsis of Iran. It must be acknowledged at the outset that detailed and accurate statistics relating to the census of the Iranian Zoroastrians are not available. In 1879, von H. Schindler adjudged their number to be 8,400 persons. In 1887, Professor Browne estimated them to be between seven and ten thousand. The book, "The Middle East", published in 1948 gave the total number of the Iranian Zoroastrians as about ten thousand souls. (?). In the census statistics published by the Ministry of Interior of Iran in 1329 (1949-50), the following figures are given about the Zoroastrians :—

Men	:	4054
Women	:	4396
Total	:	<hr/> 8450

It is, however, evident that none of these data gives the correct number of the Zoroastrians living in Iran.

During the last fifteen years i. e., 1934-1950 I have myself paid repeated visits to the Zoroastrian colonies in Yazd and Kerman and have also maintained a close contact with the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Teheran. I can boldly say that the figures quoted above are less than half the actual number of the Iranian Zoroastrians. At the moment, the Department of Census and Statistics of Iran is undertaking an accurate census of the Zoroastrians scattered in the villages and smaller towns.

### Education in the Parsi Community.

I am sure you are interested to know some facts about the education of the Parsi community of Iran.

From the year 1329 A.H./1911 A. D. when the Constitution Act of Education was approved by the Majlis, primary education



was made compulsory for all Iranian citizens under Articles 3 and 4 of the said Act.<sup>1</sup> The latter article while placing no restriction on the method which may be used for imparting this education, stresses the need for attaining the standards fixed by the Government. Also the Article 7 of the same Act has ensured the right of admission to the Government institutions to all non-Muslim children. In Yezd and Kerman, primary as well as secondary institutions were opened especially for the education of the Zoroastrians. In 1906, a society, called the "Andjuman-e-Zardoshtiane Iran" was founded in Teheran. The chief aim of this Society was to look after the maintenance of the Zoroastrian schools, colleges and hospitals in the country. Zoroastrian students have also been provided with the facilities for higher education after their completing the secondary studies in the aforesaid cities.

From 1928/1347 when the law for sending a hundred students abroad annually for higher studies came in force, the Zoroastrian graduates have been regularly participating in the examinations held for the selection of the candidates. Some of them have acquired high positions in these examinations, and have been selected and sent abroad. Even in the University of Teheran, are some Zoroastrian Professors in the Faculties of Medicine, Sciences and Literature.

Some of the Zoroastrian institutions in Yezd and Kerman were founded with the monetary aid of the Indian Zoroastrians. These are provided with modern buildings, libraries and laboratories. One of them, namely the Anushirwan Dadgar Women's College of Teheran, is so well-reputed that many Muslim families prefer to send their wards to these institutions to study along with their Zoroastrian sisters. In some of the primary schools of the Zoroastrians co-education has been introduced.

The following data will give you some idea of the strength of the Zoroastrian secondary schools (upto the Intermediate standard) in Iran as it existed sixteen years ago:—

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1. Refer to the Annexure 1 to this lecture.

Firuz Bahram (Teheran)	262
Anushirwan Dadgar (Teheran)	221
Iran Shahr (Kerman)	77
Marker Boys' (Yezd)	102
Marker Girls' (Yezd)	63
Keikhosrovi (Yezd)	132

The primary schools of the Zoroastrians, are not included in this list.

Here, on behalf of the Iranian Zoroastrians, I deem it my duty to thank the Parsi Community of India who have rendered considerable monetary aid towards the building and furnishing of the Zoroastrian schools in Iran.

### The Social Status of the Zoroastrians,

The last hundred years or so, have witnessed great social and political upheavals in Iran. Also during this period the status of the Zoroastrians has tremendously improved.

The year 1882 may be marked as the starting point of this development. It was in the course of this year that the then Shah of Iran abolished Jizya, which was considered to be a humiliating tax levied on the non-Muslims. About the same period, a sense of nationalism had gradually developed among the Iranians. Hence, they began to take interest in their ancient history and discarded the religious differences and the former superiority complex against Zoroastrians. Also they began to invest their capitals in the Zoroastrian business firms and banks, which enjoyed a high reputation for their honesty, integrity and industry. The same period (the latter half of the 19th century) also saw the establishment of closer contacts between the Parsis of India and Iran.

The Parsis of India had founded the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund Society in 1854, and had deputed a learned man, named Manakji, son of Limji Houshang Hataria of Bombay to Iran as their envoy and custodian of the Parsi interests in that country. Manakji was a scholar and he published a number of religious works of his community in modern Persian. He died

in Iran in about 1890. After him, a certain Ardeshirji Edulji Reporter who was also a scholar, and a distinguished Parsi of Bombay, went to Iran to represent the Indian Parsis. He continued to live in Teheran till 1933 when he too breathed his last. Later, the Iran League was founded in Bombay in 1922. Eminent Parsi Fathers like Sir Hormusji C. Dinshaw, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, my learned friend Sir Rustom Masani, and the late Dinshah J. Irani Solicitor have taken great pains to strengthen these bonds. At present the Society brings out a quarterly magazine from Bombay, managed by Mr. K. A. Fitter, the Secretary of the League. After the Millenary of Ferdowsi was celebrated in Iran in 1934, the League presented to Iran a bronze statue of the great poet which was erected in Teheran in 1945 with due ceremony<sup>1</sup>.

### Parsis under the Constitutional Regime.

In the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran in 1906, the Parsis sided with the Constitutionalists and consequently, in the first Indirect Election Law for the election of the Majlis, passed in 1909/1327 A. H., as well as in the second Election Law passed in 1911/1329 A. H., granting free and direct franchise to the people, the Zoroastrians were allocated one seat in the Majlis<sup>2</sup>. Some Parsis like Arbab Jamshid Jamshidian and Arbab Keikhosrow Shahbrokh are still remembered for their service to the Constitution. The latter was the President of the Anjuman-e-Zardoshtian of Teheran upto the end of his life and also the Deputy of the Zoroastrian community in the Parliament. His efforts for linking the Parsis of India and Iran will always be praised. He died in 1940. Thus, since the days of the Constitutional Revolution, the Parsis of Iran have endeared themselves to all lovers of Democracy and Freedom in Iran, who look upon the Zoroastrian community as their national and patriotic brethren. The Constitution itself provides that all classes of the people of Iran shall be represented in the National Assembly (Majlis) and associated in all the social and the political affairs of their country.

1. Refer "Parsiye-Nagbz".

2. Refer to the Annex 2 to this lecture.

Also the Articles 8 and 18 of the Constitution ensure that the people of Iran shall enjoy Equality of Rights before the laws of Government.<sup>1</sup>

### Parsis in the Pahlavi Era.

In 1925, when the Pahlavi regime was established in Iran, popular interest in the Zoroastrian culture reached its highest limits. His Late Majesty Reza Shah the Great, who had pure Iranian blood in his veins and was proud of his ancestry, styled his dynasty as "Pahlavi," i. e., the name of the language and the culture of the Sassanians. He devoted special attention to ensuring peace, prosperity and justice to the Zoroastrians. During his beneficent reign if any fanatic Muslim was found guilty of an act of offence against the life or the property of a Zoroastrian, he was mercilessly punished by the legal and the administrative authorities. Similarly, great attention was paid to the amelioration of the Zoroastrian farmers and traders. They were granted all the rights and concessions enjoyed by the Muslims, without any discrimination whatsoever. The same amelioratory policy towards the Parsis is being pursued by our present ruler, His Imperial Majesty Mohamed Reza Shah Pahlavi. During the reigns of these two great monarchs all cultural delegations of the Indian Parsis, visiting Iran, have been accorded due welcome and given the honour of the audience of the Shahinshah. This royal as well as public interest in the welfare of the Zoroastrians became so intense, that the doors of the national army had to be thrown open to the Parsi youth. Even at present most of the young men belonging to the religious minorities, after completing the compulsory military service, do not generally choose the military career; while, on the contrary, the Zoroastrian youths vindicate their patriotic sentiments by their preference of the military career.

Also in the social organizations, like the Red Lion and Sun Society (Iranian Red Cross) and the Imperial Organization of Social Services, which are run under the patronship of Her

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1. Refer to the Annex 3 to this lecture.

Majesty the Queen and Their Royal Highnesses the Princesses, sisters of the Shahinshah, Zoroastrian ladies take a leading part and contribute their share, without any reserve, to the upkeep of the poor and the needy.

In short, in the present Age, the Zoroastrians, men and women, old and young, enjoy perfect equality of status before the law of Iran. Also the local bodies, the corporations, the Government offices, the defence services, the University and all other civil and military organizations treat the Zoroastrians on the same level as the Muslims. Even the masters of the Islamic Jurisprudence and the Ulema who at one time feared the popular uproar to take any interest in the well-being of the Zoroastrians, have now declared by Futwa that they are under the protection of Islam and, as such, due respect should be paid to their acquired rights, lives and properties.

#### The Interest of Modern Iran in her Ancient History.

As I said before, from the middle of the 19th century, the people of Iran cultivated a new interest in the pre-Islamic history of their country. This movement, which of course, was in the best interests of the Zoroastrians, had many aspects.

One of these was the interest taken in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. It became so very popular that during the last 100 years or so, several editions of this huge and voluminous book have been brought out in Iran and India. The celebration of the millenary of Ferdowsi by the whole nation in 1934/1313, in Teheran and at Tous where his tomb lies, was another manifestation of this great movement.

The movement of the purge of the Persian language from foreign words took place in the same century. It was in 1869/1285 A. H. that Prince Jalaluddin Mirza for the first time wrote a brief history of Iran in pure Persian. The book is known as Nameh-Khosrowan, نامه خسروان and has been published in three volumes in Teheran and Bombay. The inclination towards pure Persian, thus, having gained ground after the Revolution of Iran (1906), reached its maximum intensity during the reign of His

Late Majesty Reza Shah, the Great. The result was that a considerable time of the Iranian Academy فرهنگستان ایران was devoted to the task of inventing new technical terms to replace those which belonged to Arabic, Turkish or the European languages. Consequently, more than two thousand terms in pure Persian have replaced those in vogue earlier.

I am presenting to your library a copy of the glossary of these terms and a copy of my humble work "Parsiye-Naghz", which is an anthology of works produced by masters in pure Persian. It also contains a good deal of information about the development of Persian language.

One of the clearest manifestations of the influence of this movement over the minds of the people of Iran is offered by the fact that a vast majority of those born during this period is named after the heroes and heroines of the Shahnameh. Male names, like Houshang, Shahpour, Minoutchehr, Rustam, Esfandiar, Parviz, Hormuz, Ardesbir etc., and female ones, like Homa, Irandokht Roudabeh, Manizheh, Farangis etc., are now found in almost every Iranian family. These names have replaced the Arabic ones.

The patriotism which has been engendered among the people of modern Iran is a praiseworthy and highly estimable sentiment. I am sure so far as the respect to our predecessors is concerned, the Indian Parsis share the ancestral pride with the Iranians, and both of them are united in aspiring for the ideal set down by Ferdowsi in the following verses :—

ندانی که ایران نشست من است	جهان سر بر زبردست من است
هنر زرد ایرانیان است در پس	ندارند شیر زیات را بکس
همه بکدلانته و بزادات شناس	به نیکی نمارند از بد هراس
دریغ است ایران که ویران شود	کنام بانگات و شرارت شود
همه جای جنگی سواران بدی	نستنگه شهریاران بدی
نباشد چو ایران تن من مباد	چنین دارم از موبد پاک یاد
همه سر بر تن بکشتن دهم	از آن به که کشور بدشت دهم



Dost thou not know that Iran is my homeland?  
 Is not the world, therefore, entirely at my command?  
 Merit is possessed by Iranians alone,  
 (In bravery) they don't give any worth to the lion.  
 All of them are united and believe in God  
 They are not daunted by the evil while they do the right  
 thing.

It would be a pity if Iran is ruined,  
 And becomes the den of lions and leopards.  
 Everywhere in this land there are Knights-at-Arms.  
 Everywhere there are seats of rulers.  
 If Iran does not survive let me die too  
 This is the lesson I learnt from the pious man.  
 Let us all sacrifice our lives,  
 For, it is better to die than to give the country to the enemy.

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#### ANNEXE 1.

##### Extracts from the Constitution Act of Education.

- Article 3: Elementary education for all Iranian citizens is compulsory.
- Article 4: There is no restriction placed on the method which may be used for acquiring this education. One, however is compelled to attain the standards fixed by the Government.
- Article 5: Every citizen of Iran is required by law to persuade his children, having acquired the age-limit of seven to have the elementary education, either at home or in schools.
- Article 7: Non-Muslim citizens shall not have the right to demand for instruction in their own religions in Government institutions, and they shall have to study a course of Islamiyat (fundamentals of Islam).



## ANNEXE 2.

In the first Indirect Election Law for the election of the deputies of the Majlis (National Assembly), passed in 1909/1327 A. H., as well as the second Election Law, passed in 1910/1329 A.H., granting free and direct franchise to the people, the Zoroastrians have been allocated one seat in the Majlis.

## ANNEXE 3.

Extracts from the Constitution of Iran.

## Article 2: (Constitution)

The National Assembly (Majlis) represents all classes of the people of Iran who are mutually associated in all the social and the political affairs of their country.

## Article 8: (Supplement to Constitution)

The people of Iran shall enjoy Equality of Rights before the laws of the Government.

## Article 18: (Supplement to Constitution)

Acquisition and impartation of Education, the Sciences and the Arts shall be free, except such as are prohibited by the divine law.

## FATWA ON THE RIGHTS OF ZOROASTRIANS.

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"To vex and humiliate the Zoroastrian community or other non-Muslims, who are under the protection of Islam is unlawful, and it is obligatory on all Muslims duly to observe the injunctions of **His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets**, respecting their good treatment, the winning of their affections, and the guarding of their lives, honour and possessions, nor should they swerve by so much as a hair's breadth from this, please God Almighty."

— Mujtahid of Karbatta.

21-2-1910.

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## PARSIS & PERSIA.

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"... Anything which serves to strengthen the bonds between the Zoroastrians and their ancient home is worthy of all commendation and support; I think you will find amongst the younger generation of Persians in Persia a very much more friendly feeling,—indeed a warm admiration,—for the Church of Zoroaster. The truth is that the talk about the "unchanging East" which people are so fond of indulging in here is great nonsense, and the change of outlook in Persia since the Revolution of 1906 has been very great."

Prof. E. G. Browne.

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1—10: P'oraians

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